



## *Assisting Displaced Afghans in Kabul*

KABUL, Afghanistan – At the height of the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s, more than six million Afghans were refugees in Pakistan and Iran, or internally displaced within Afghanistan. It presented the world with the worst ever case of a nation of people driven from their homes.

The end of the war with the Soviets, however, did not bring an end to the refugee problem. Fighting between Mujahideen warlords, and then arrival of the Taliban regime, caused tens of thousands of Afghans to seek safer havens.

Progress is being made today in returning these people to the villages they once lived in, but around Kabul two camps for displaced persons still exist.

Members of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix made a visit recently to one of these in western Kabul, known as “Chamani Babrak,” to assist the 125 families living there. This camp originally opened in September 2003 near the Olympic Stadium, and was populated by returning refugees from Iran and Pakistan. Those that remain today are from many different areas of Afghanistan, and still hold out hope of returning to their native lands. In addition to bringing clothes and other necessities to the Afghans, a team of medical personnel from the Logistical Task Force of CJTF Phoenix pro-



Sgt. Richard Williams, a medic and eye specialist with the Logistical Task Force Medical Company, treats a young Afghan girl.

Photo by Lt. Col. Gregory Moore  
Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix PAO



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vided Medical Civil Action Program (MEDCAP) assistance to the residents of the camp.

One of the most inspiring scenes was the courage of the young children who jumped into the dentist's field chair to have teeth pulled. Not one flinched during the quickly conducted procedure.

Doctor (Capt.) Nabil Youssef, a dentist with a private practice in Englewood, Fla., joined the National Guard to "give back to the country." The MEDCAP has provided him an opportunity to also give to the Afghan people. This visit was his first time working with local nationals and it was his "best day in Afghanistan."

Assisting Youssef was Spc. Jacquelyn Kahn, from Bradenton, Fla., who misses her boyfriend and five sisters, but has not found much time to think about their absence. "Helping the children," she said, "has been one of the most satisfying experiences of my deployment to Afghanistan." Doctor (Capt.) James W. Robinson, a 9-year veteran of the Florida National Guard and an optometrist in Land-O-Lakes, Fla., in civilian life, has volunteered to stay longer than the usual three-month tour for medical professionals because of the impact he can make on Afghans as well as members of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix. Although his primary mission is caring for military personnel at Camp Phoenix, he knows that there is a great return on the investment of MEDCAP visits. "Even going out for a day can make a difference," he said.

Coordination of medical personnel for MEDCAP visits is the responsibility of Maj. Thomas McMahan, the Medical Company commander and Brigade Surgeon. On a typical MEDCAP mission, his personnel will examine and assist approximately 150 Afghans in a 3-hour period. The most common ailments include arthritic symptoms, diabetic conditions, and common dental and eye complaints. McMahan believes that MEDCAP assistance is important because it shows that the United States is "here to help and, at the same time, educate the people on how to care for themselves." "By providing this service," he said, "we are gaining the trust of the Afghan people and creating a safer place for our Soldiers to accomplish their training mission with the Afghan National Army." According to McMahan, his goal is to conduct at least two MEDCAP missions per quarter. The visit to Chamai Babrak is positive proof that the assistance being provided to the Afghan people is making a difference.



Cpt. James W. Robinson, an ophthalmologist with the Florida National Guard, examines an elderly Afghan man.

Photo by Lt. Col. Gregory Moore  
Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix PAO



# Patrolling Zabul Province with the ANA

ZABUL PROVINCE, Afghanistan – An old police headquarters with no running water or electricity has served as home for a platoon of ANA soldiers and their embedded trainers who are working with a detachment of 503rd Airborne troopers at Forward Operating Base Baylough in Zabul Province.

Constant patrolling in a 5-kilometer wide area known as the Baylough Bowl leaves little time, however, to worry about the missing amenities of life.

Just last September, Mullah Toor Manan, one of the top Taliban commanders wanted by U. S. forces in Afghanistan, was killed in a firefight near the compound. A young American lieutenant from the 503rd Airborne and his interpreter were also killed in the action.

Almost daily, anti-coalition forces fire 107mm rockets, 60mm mortars and rocket-propelled grenades at the compound, and every patrol is conducted with the threat of an ambush.

This has not, however, dampened the enthusiasm and commitment of the ANA soldiers who are honing their skills under the tutelage of Sgt. 1st Class Michael Kinghorn, an ETT who calls Omaha, Neb.,

Home. Kinghorn joined the members of his unit in April 2005 when they were undergoing their training at Kabul Military Training Center, and moved with them to FOB Baylough in July. He sees improvement in the basic skills of his ANA charges, who are highly motivated to learn their profession.

“Although we have had to work through communication challenges,” he said, “we have progressed to the point where I am now ‘teaching the teachers’ so the ANA NCOs can instruct their soldiers.”

South of FOB Baylough, heading towards Qalat, is another isolated location that serves as home for ANA soldiers and their ETTs. Forward Operating Base Lane is a little more refined in appearance than FOB Baylough, but the easiest and safest access to the site is still by helicopter.

Staff Sgt. Mike Travis from Hastings, Neb., and Sgt. 1st Class Robert McIntire from Aylett, Va., have been working with the ANA company at FOB Lane since September 2005.

Travis, who spent 8 years on active duty with the Army, is now a welder with a fabrication company when not in uniform. His previous deployments include Kuwait in 1996 and Bosnia in 1999. He finds himself more involved as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, but also has experienced more frustrations.

One of his greatest challenges is getting the young ANA NCOs to lead, but he adds “they are very excited about what they are doing.”

McIntire, who is a division manager for Crane American back home, has been a member of the Virginia National Guard since 1993. He also has active duty experience with the Army.

Communications with his ANA soldiers, and learning the culture of Afghanistan and its people, are the challenges McIntire sites, while emphasizing that his experiences as an ETT so far have been highly rewarding. One of the most satisfying results of the mentoring process so far has been the successful participation of ANA soldiers in the patrols that bring stability to Zabul Province.

Visits to FOBs Baylough and Lane confirm that the work of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix embedded trainers is making a difference on the front line of the war on terror



Staff Sgt. Mike Travis offers encouragement to the ANA soldiers he works with at Forward Operating Base Lane.

Photo by Lt. Col. Gregory Moore  
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## Fort of the Ghilzai

On the right bank of the Tarnak River, 85 miles northeast of Kandahar, a 200-foot high mound with an imposing fortress dominates the countryside that is the heartland of the Ghilzai Pashtuns. The town near Kalat-i-Ghilzai (Fort of the Ghilzai) is known today simply as Qalat, and serves as the capital of Zabul Province. For centuries, however, this solitary fortified hill has provided control of communications and commerce between Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul and has been the site of many historic battles.

It is said that Nadir Shah, the great Persian ruler, destroyed the fortification in 1738 when he was subduing the rebellious Ghilzai tribe. During the first Anglo-Afghan war, the British rebuilt and expanded the existing structure and stationed a garrison to control the territory. In April 1842, following the destruction of the Army of the Indus as it attempted to leave Afghanistan, 6,000 Afghan tribesmen besieged Kalat-i-Ghilzai. Amazingly, after several months of fighting, the indomitable British were relieved without the loss of a single life. The 3rd Regiment of Infantry, consisting of approximately 600 native-Indian soldiers originally enlisted by the British to fight for Shah Shuja, helped repulse a desperate assault on May 20, 1842. For its gallant effort, the unit was renamed the "Kalat-i-Ghilzai Regiment" and made a part of the Bengal Army. The East India Company (the government of India at that time) awarded a special medal to the defenders. It is one of the earliest "campaign medals" issued by any country. Today the fort still serves as a post for a detachment of the Afghan National Army.



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